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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses social and cultural change, deep ecology, and systems thinking in relation to the maintenance of Indigenous cultures and languages. All cultures change, and the current crisis in language loss for Native communities is related to cultural change. From a systems perspective, culture is a way of thinking about one's social system. As the social structures and actions of the system change, culture lags behind, and the cultural values of the community begin to conflict with the social structure. The dramatic changes in Inuit lifestyle in the past century are offered as an example. However, today all societies are undergoing tremendous changes as the information age unfolds. When the conflict between social structures and cultural values becomes too great, a cultural revolution occurs and a new cultural model appears. "Saving" a culture forever is impossible, so indigenous peoples must work at saving the good aspects of their culture and sharing them with others. At this moment, the world faces a variety of ecological crises. Deep ecology--a spiritual view of the world as an organic, integrated system--looks to the values of indigenous peoples. Native peoples must overcome mistrust, share their values with the larger ecological community, and thereby preserve those values in a new network of cooperation. (Contains 25 references.) (SV)

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The Need for an Ecological Cultural Community

Robert N. St. Clair, John A. Busch

For several decades we have been concerned with cultural and social change. Some of us have approached these issues from a systems theory perspective known as sociocybernetics. This theory is elaborated in the writings of John and Gladys Busch (Busch, 1998; Busch & Busch, 1983, 1992, 1998) and Robert St. Clair (St. Clair, 1997; St. Clair & Busch, 2000). We are on a quest to develop a theoretical model that adequately accounts for societal transformations. We have also addressed these issues from the perspective of language renewal (St. Clair, 1992; St. Clair & Leap, 1981). It is this systems perspective that we will share with you on the issue of cultural demise.

Joshua Fishman, an expert in language planning, addressed the issues of language loss and cultural maintenance in one of the earlier *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages* conferences (Fishman, 1996). He noted that there have been successful cases of saving a language: Hebrew, Irish, and Welsh. When the Jewish State of Israel was being formed, a schoolteacher developed his own textbooks and began teaching Hebrew. At that time, it was a dead language. He did not worry about speakers of other dialects. He did not seek the approval of administrators. He did not wait for a referendum. He was a pioneer who saw what needed to be done and did it. Now, it is the official language of that country and is used for all aspects of social interaction. In his paper, Fishman shares his experiences with that language and attributes its success to the fact that the language was used across generations and in the vernacular of everyday life. Hence, he calls this process the "re-vernacularization" of Hebrew. He argues that if a language is to survive, it must find its support outside of the formal academic settings of the school system; it must become the language of friendship, affection, religion, prayer, shopping, family discourse, and other forms of daily life. It must become part of what Goffman (1967) calls an interaction ritual.

Fishman (1996) also discusses his study of the revival of Irish and Welsh. As in his discussion of Hebrew, he cites the pioneers among the Irish who began to save the Irish language at a time when only 3% of the population still spoke it. Currently, these languages are in full revival and spoken by two-thirds of the population. Those who are against their revival have depicted a different situation. However, as Davey (1998) has noted about Welsh, for example, these statistics are wrong. The younger generations are rapidly learning and using Welsh.

One of the more interesting comments Fishman makes has to do with re-socialization. He said that, when Hebrew was made the language of everyday life, the society underwent major changes, and language was made a part of those changes. The changes that he referred to occurred during the period of readjustment among the Jewish immigrants from Russia and from Germany. With their arrival in Israel, there was an immediate clash of two cultures and two language systems. As system theorists, we will return to the concept of society as a system and how that plays a role in cultural change. More important, we

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will address the issue of cultural demise and offer several scenarios on how that loss can be addressed in a time of rapid change among all cultures (Toffler, 1970, 1980).

The Current Crisis in Language Loss

We are all familiar with the many cases of language loss. At the 1998 *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages* conference in Louisville, Kentucky, Evangeline Parsons-Yazzie highlighted the closing ceremonies with the honouring of the Elders. Among those being honoured were various last speakers of their tribes. It was a ceremony of hope. It was the call of a pioneering spirit—a Native speaker of Navajo who is also a teacher of that language at Northern Arizona University. We all knew that interwoven among those moments of hope were experiences filled with agony, failure, and despair. This crisis in language loss has been eloquently expressed by Richard Littlebear, a Native speaker of Northern Cheyenne and a teacher of his own Native tongue at a bilingual tribal college in Montana.

> Some of us said, "Let's get our languages into written form' and we did, and still our Native American languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let's make dictionaries for our language" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let us get linguists trained in our own languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let's train our own people who speak our languages to become linguists" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let us apply for a federal bilingual education grant" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let's let the schools teach the languages" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let's develop culturally-relevant materials" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let's use language masters to teach our languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let's tape-record the elders speaking our languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let's videotape-record the elders speaking our languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying. Then we said, "Let's put our native language speakers on CD ROM" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying. (Littlebear, 1996, p. xiii)

What these words force us to address is the current crisis in language loss. Why has language maintenance failed among so many indigenous groups in North America? Why have various attempts at language renewal failed (St. Clair, 1992; St. Clair & Leap, 1983)? Before answering these questions, we must first look at culture and what we mean by this term. We must also ask why language is so crucial to cultural identity.

Culture in Social Systems

The concept of culture has been used in different ways within all disciplines to which it is relevant, including linguistics, anthropology, and sociology. From a systems perspective, however, culture refers to the symbols and the interconnected sets of symbols such as stories, myths, creeds, and even scientific theories that humans create to explain the world around them. In essence, culture is a way of thinking and communicating. Again, from the systems perspective, it is helpful to contrast culture as thought to culture as social action (i.e., what we actually do). Even though what we do is usually consistent with how we have learned to think of the world, it is not always the case. Thus, our actions are important. Most important from the systems perspective are the actions that we engage in that are patterned or recurrent. Even though we can negotiate new relationships with one another, many patterns of relationship have already been established and these relationships strongly influence our options for change and for maintenance of our past ways of thinking.

The relationships that are most important are those that are patterned and thus recurrent. Just like transient relationships, these patterned relationships exist between the positions that the members of a group recognize and occupy. For example, families in groups that recognize the importance of maternal or paternal uncles are likely to have specific names for these positions. Attached to these positions is a set of cultural expectations to which everyone in the group believes the holder of such a position should conform. That is, the thoughts about the position (called "norms") give guidance to the occupant of the position concerning how he should act. These actions bring the occupant of the position into patterned relationships with the occupants of other positions, such as various types of nephews. Thus, in the long term, what we do (i.e., the actions we carry out) is guided by or can be said to be compatible with what we think—our culture. We call these patterned networks of relationships among positions "social structure." Thus, usually in the long-term, social structure as action is compatible with culture as thought.

Unfortunately, in our common way of speaking about life, we fail to make this crucial distinction between culture and social structure. Yet, the lack of such a distinction can cause great confusion. Fishman (1996) notes how many Elders lose touch with the younger generation because the times have changed and this experience of cognitive dissonance has caused them to avoid new patterns and events in their lives. However, when one says that the "times have changed," one is in essence saying that the things that are necessary to do today to make a living or to get along with others are not all the same as in the past. That is, one is saying that the social structures in which we live have changed. For the Elders, it may appear that the younger generations are unappreciative of the group's traditional culture and unwilling to learn its intricacies. To the younger generations, it may appear that the Elders are out of touch with what is happening today and living mentally in the past for reasons perhaps no better than nostalgia. From the systems perspective, one would theorize that, as the social structure changed, some of the traditional culture became less relevant to everyday

life. Furthermore, the traditional culture may not have been replaced by any internally consistent new interpretation of the new social structure. This is the problem with change in social systems. The way that we make sense out of our world (i.e., our culture) tends to be consistent with what we do (i.e., our social structure) only in the long term.

Changes in Societal Organization

We already know a lot about how societies change. Gerhard Lenski and Jean Lenski (1974) have approached cultural and social change in terms of how groups survive and maintain their coherence. These authors bring into focus the role of technology in social change. For example, societies that anthropologists call hunters and gatherers survive by living off of the land. For them, the state of nature is crucial to their existence. Consequently, their culture revolves around nature. Their hunting territories are sacred. They know how to read nature. They know where the sun is during the various seasons. They celebrate the beginning of new cycles of life. The system among hunters and gatherers is ecological, and the relationships between the group and nature are crucial. Some of these societies still exist today. Change in the social structure of these groups came about when the means of transportation improved. The introduction of the horse into many hunter and gatherer societies was tantamount to a revolution in social structure. Hunting from horseback produced a new way of life. This was reflected in cultural change. Such societies changed as the relationship of the people to nature and to each other changed. Eventually, the new technology (the hunting by horseback) produced new patterned relationships among the people and, by consequence, new additions to their culture. Thus, we would say that their form of social organization was transformed.

However, much more fundamental changes in societal organization have also occurred. The simple horticultural societies are another kind of societal type. They likely evolved from hunting and gathering societies where populations became too dense to rely only on hunting and gathering. The simple horticulturists turned to the more productive technology of planting. These horticulturists are bound to the land. Their livelihood comes from the land. Hence, the land is sacred. Change in these groups occurs because of overpopulation. When one does not have enough land to support the group, problems occur. This is especially true of situations where neighbouring tribes occupy nearby land. Where these groups occur today, we find warfare and other forms of population control. It is not surprising that warriors are given a special status in these groups. The protection of the land becomes a major part of the culture of this group.

We are now living in industrial societies. Today, these societies have a culture based on business. As in all societal types, the relationships between people are based on the positions that they occupy in the society. The relationship to the land has changed. More and more people live in the city. They have become divorced from nature and no longer know how to read the movements of the stars, the moon, and the sun. The events in their lives are codified and re-presented through new forms of symbolism. The novel, a representation of life,

becomes more real than life. The depiction of nature becomes more important than being in nature. Traditions based on oral culture, on speech, have been transformed by the development of print culture—the world on paper. Technology within industrial societies has undergone tumultuous change. Relationships between people are replaced by relationships with things. The bonds that now hold people together are the laws, the courts, and the judicial systems. Bureaucracy has become a way of life. Before documenting how cultural change works, we need to look more closely at symbolic change and at how people relate to one another through symbols.

Change in Symbolic Systems

From the above discussion, it should be clear that culture originates from society and that it is socially constructed. Within any group, there are usually a variety of subgroups that have their own system of relationships. When any one of these groups comes into power, their viewpoints become the host culture. European culture, for example, is not produced by a steady state system; rather, it is a reflection of a set of relationships within a system that has changed over time. In one period of the history of Europe, the aristocracy favoured classical music, and they supported the genius of their contemporary musicians. At this time, European high culture meant classical music. At another point in European history, the philosophers were considered to be of central interest to the aristocracy. Consequently, they were supported and protected within the newly emerging system of universities. As noted in a previous *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages* conference (St. Clair, 1997), the social construction of reality in the United States has also undergone shifts. It moved from the rise of the consumer culture to the development of suburbia, and it now engages itself in the marketing of monopoly capitalist business practices and the fostering of English as the language of business.

Some of the Tribes represented here at this conference were once hunters and gatherers. They still profess the values of such societies. However, much has changed around them, and these changes have caused a rift between what they believe they are symbolically and what they really are in terms of their daily lives. The same could be said about those groups that came from simple horticultural societies. Obviously, some indigenous societies changed vary rapidly because of technology. When the horse was introduced to some hunter-gatherer tribes, those societies changed. Their social structures were readjusted. They may have seen their culture as being the same, but it was not. They may have felt that they were still living the ways of the good old days, but they were not. When tribes that came out of simple horticultural societies rely on tractors, they have changed. They may believe that they are living in the style of the old days, but they are not. One can never go back to the old days. Life has changed and so have all of us. You can never cross the same river twice. The river has changed and so have you. Cultures change in two ways. They change in their social structures, and they change in their symbolic systems. It is now time to consider some current examples of how change works and the problems caused by change within a cultural system.

Cultural Change During Periods of Crisis

Lisa Mastny (2000) has described some of the problems that occurred when the ancient hunting traditions of the Inuit clashed with those of the encroaching industrial societies of the South (Canada, the United States, and Russia). The changes took place in two major ways: contact with outsiders and changes in climate such as global warming. Her discussion begins with the Elders of Pelly Bay, an Inuit community on Canada's Arctic coastline. They were working on being self-sufficient and were in the process of marketing their Kiviuq (mythical traveller) dolls when federal agents at the U.S. Border in Buffalo, New York confiscated them. The dolls were being shipped to a master puppeteer in the United States, but they ended up in the hands of the Fish and Wildlife Service. These items were barred from entry into the country because they violated the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. The dolls were made of sealskin and whalebone, both considered illegal under the 1972 Act. These items were crucial for the economic survival of the Nunavut, a nation of 23,000 people.

What is interesting about these Inuit is that they had experienced widespread cultural and political renewal and had a unique opportunity to create a self-sustaining economy. This group wanted to maintain its old ways. They were excellent hunters. However, they could not return to the past. Their lives changed when they encountered European and North American commercial whalers in the early 20th century. They were hired as hunters and served as guides on trading expeditions. They even served as crewmembers on whaling vessels. They changed because their technology and social structure changed. In the early 1900s, for example, they encountered the devastating effects of influenza when the 200 Inupiat (the group near the Beaufort Sea) were left with only 40 survivors. Their lives changed when they accepted the practices of the venturing capitalists who changed their economic system into a cash society. They changed when they adopted the whaling technology of these outsiders and began to use whaling guns to harpoon their food supply. They changed when they accepted the value systems of missionaries who wanted to convert them into a new system of spiritual belief. They changed when they gave up their igloos for fixed housing. They changed when they accepted the education system of the outsiders. They changed when they started to use the languages of these venture capitalists in lieu of their own. They changed when they gave up their old use of medicines and replaced them with medical supplies. They changed when they replaced hunting with cannery work. They changed when they could no longer survive on their own as they did in the old days. Even though they were working hard on going back to the old days, their dreams were crushed. The problem was that they could never really go back to the old days.

Mastny (2000) continues her discussion by looking at other groups living in the region of the Arctic Circle. She mentions how, in some tribes, the skin covered kayaks were replaced by motor boats and how the old stone-tipped harpoons were replaced by high-powered harpoon cannons. Snow sleds were replaced by snowmobiles. Hunters now use telescopes, rifles, radio transmitters, small planes, and all forms of technology now available to them.

Not only have the hunters changed, their families have as well. Inuit families watch sports events on TV. Their children play video games. They use computers, invest in stocks, drive cars, and share in all of the amenities of industrial life. We are not trying to argue that they should not do these things; we are just reiterating the fact that their social organization has changed many times over. They can no longer be hunters in the way of the old days. International laws now dictate what they can hunt and when they can do it. What is interesting about these changes in Inuit culture is that such societal transformations are not unique. The whole world is undergoing major changes and with such rapidity that even the host culture is in the process of being replaced by a newly emerging system based on information.

Change in the Information Society

Alvin Toffler (1970) has eloquently noted that we are all in a time of great change. Things are happening so rapidly that we are unable to process all of the new information. In addition to this, we are encountering a break with the past. The reason for these changes is that we are restructuring our industrial societies to cope with changes brought about by the newly emerging information technologies. Our relationships have undergone tremendous change. We now have highly segmental conceptions of self. We no longer invest in knowing others in depth; we know only fragments of who they are. Our contacts with others have become superficial. Toffler (1970, p. 97) calls this the "modular man." Rather than entangling ourselves fully with others, we now plug into a module of a person's personality. Our relationships with others are safely limited. We have become fragmented personalities. This new way of seeing people makes enduring and meaningful social relationships very difficult to develop and sustain. Hence, we tend to have superficial and short-duration relationships.

Another aspect of the new information age is mobility. We move a lot. We change jobs often. Companies treat us as temporary employees. We have become "rent-a-persons." We change homes often. We even change friends often. We make friends and then move away from them. The people we know are all just acquaintances. If friendships are based on shared interests and aptitudes, then friendships change as our relationships with others change. We are comers and movers. Our children have become nomads. The old concept of the family is dead. People used to marry for stability. Many of us now have serial marriages. We also have aggregate families where our children are related to each other through divorce and remarriage. We now have fractured families.

Where will all of these changes take us? We don't know. We are on the move. We know that information is the most important feature of this new society. We know that we need to be highly educated. We must have a new sense of technology. We must be flexible and learn to readjust to events encroaching on our lives. We now have electronic mail addresses. We now have electronic friends, e-friends. We now do business over the Internet, e-commerce. Furthermore, many libraries no longer have card catalogues. When we look for books, we must do an electronic search. Even some of our books have been housed in electronic

libraries and databases, virtual libraries. We live in accelerated societies. How can we hold on to the old ways when everything is changing?

We are moving away from an energy based industrial society toward an information society with its heavy emphasis on developing, processing, and transmitting information. Yet some forms of the information society are not viable. They would lead to a destruction of the very ecological base that makes possible all human societies. The only forms of the information societies that will not self-destruct are those that will incorporate an Ecological Culture. Such cultures will place the highest emphasis on sustainable ecological relationships and cooperative enhancement of human relationships. Anything short of tending to ecological relationships and our relationships with each other will ultimately put largely irreversible and intolerable burdens on the ecosystem of the planet.

There is a difference in knowing where we are going versus where we want to go. In the next paragraphs, we will suggest that the goal for this new information age is in Deep Ecology. The new language is ecological, and the community includes all of us—the Gaia Hypothesis.

The World Crisis in Ecology

It is time that we turn the discussion back to the Arctic Circle and the reason why we need to create a new cultural consciousness that is sensitive to nature, something that many of the indigenous cultures of the Americas have in common. Mastny (2000, pp. 28-30) describes the ecological crisis that the Inuit face. During the 1950s, pilots noticed a thick haze blanketing the Arctic region. They found out that it was smog. This air pollution could not have come from the Polar Regions because there are no factories in that area. It came from the south, from the industries of Canada, Russia, the United States, and even the tropics. Scientists investigated this smog and were surprised to learn that it contained a large proportion of contaminants from heavy metal, mercury, cadmium, and PCBs. These contaminates were also found in the food chain in large quantities. A study of Inuit women on Baffin Island (Canada) showed that their breast milk contained high levels of chlordane, a pesticide. They discovered 200 different toxins in this region. These chemical experts warned the Inuit not to eat the food of that region. They encouraged them to eat imported foods. Medical reports on those who had been on the industrial society diet for awhile showed that there was a steep rise in diseases characteristically associated with the industrial nations south of the Arctic Circle—diseases of the heart, liver, and kidneys. These changes in nature directly affected the culture of the Inuit. How can you be a hunter when you are not able to hunt? How can you be a hunter when the government will not let you hunt? How can you be a hunter if what you kill has been poisoned and is no longer fit to eat?

Researchers in the polar region also found that the frozen tundra was melting. Higher temperatures meant that the ice was melting, and when the ice melts, it cannot reflect back the rays of the sun. This process of reflection is known as the Aalbedo effect," in which 80 to 90% of the sunlight in the polar region is reflected back into space, leaving the Arctic region cold. When the ice and snow

melts in this region, it exposes large areas of land directly to sunlight. The resulting disappearance of ice bridges has had a direct affect on some of the migrating animals in the region such as the moose and the lynx. The melting also has an affect on the spawning routes of the king salmon. Between 1978 and 1996, the Arctic Sea ice cover shrank by 5.5%, resulting in a loss of almost one million square kilometres of terrain.

We do not have to go to the Arctic Circle to find ecological disasters. They are everywhere. The cultures of the industrial nations had only one relationship with nature, use and abuse. Their irresponsibility has had an ecological impact on all nations, including those of the Inuit.

Towards a New Cultural Deep Ecology

Fritjof Capra (1996) begins his new book with a quotation that was inspired by Chief Seattle. It paraphrases the wisdom of his words. It reminds us that we are connected in a larger community and that the language and the values that we hold speak for the new community, Mother Earth:

> This we know,
> All things are connected
> Like the blood
> Which unites one family . . .
>
> Whatever befalls the earth,
> Befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
> Man did not weave the web of life;
> He is merely a strand in it.
> Whatever he does to the web,
> He does to himself. (Ted Perry in Capra, 1996)

There is a new breed of scientists among us. They are human system theorists, coming from a wide range of disciplines. Some are physicists (Fritjof Capra), chemists (Ilya Prigogine), neurologists (Humberto Maturana, Fracisco Varela), mathematicians (Benoît Mandelbrot, Stuart Kauffman), philosophers (Warwick Fox), and ecologists (Lynn Margulis, Joanna Macy). They all share one thing in common—systems thinking. Human beings and the groups they create constitute the systems that fascinate them the most. These researchers and philosophers are asking new questions about life. Arne Naess calls the philosophy behind this new paradigm Deep Ecology. This new field looks at culture in terms of a "social paradigm," a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions, and practices shared by a community. The practitioners of systems thinking contrast their worldview with those of "shallow ecology," an anthropomorphic or human-centred view of nature. People who subscribe to shallow ecology believe that the land is not sacred and that it is there to be used for our purposes. They see the world as a collection of isolated objects, aggregates. In deep ecology, on the other hand, the world doesn't consist of isolated objects, but networks. We are all inter-related. It recognizes the value of all human beings.

These scientists have come to realize that their old values were embedded in a materialistic view of the world. With the rise of western science under René Descartes, the notion of the universe as an organic, living, and spiritual place was replaced by a view of the world as a machine. This is the metaphor of life that the indigenous peoples of the Americas encountered when their social systems were disturbed by outside forces. The world of the machine is a dead world. This view of science overlooks the social construction of self-serving bias. It is a world governed only by mathematical laws, a very assertive world based on analysis and reductionism. However, the world that systems scientists are striving for is an integrative world based on co-operation, conservation, partnerships, and intuition. It replaces the hierarchies of power with those of networks. Their community is the world. Their values are based on healing relationships.

Why are we talking about Deep Ecology and how does it relate to saving one's language and culture? What we are putting forward in this essay is systems thinking. We began with the concept of social systems as having both social structures and cultures (meanings encoded in symbols). We noted that in many past cultures these two are intrinsically connected. The social structures of the community reflect the values of that group. However, with the passage of time, many changes in social structure occur. In various periods in the life of these groups, social structures change rapidly. This may be due to outside contacts or due to new forms of power and control from within. When this happens, the values of the community begin to conflict with the new changes in social structure. For example, the value of the family as a place of primary socialization is upheld even though television (a technological intrusion) competes with parents and provides children with a set of values counter to those upheld by their parents. When the changes in the meanings of a group are so different from other aspects of everyday life, a cultural revolution occurs. A newer cultural model replaces the old one. Sometimes these revolutions are very obvious because of vocal conflicts within the community. Sometimes, as in the case of advertising, the changes are insidious. What this all amounts to is that cultures change. All cultures change. There are no pure cultures, no pure races, no pure anything. Indeed, all cultures in the world are changing. Even the host culture of the business-dominated North America is changing (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1992). Hence, we need to stop talking about saving a culture forever because that is impossible. We need to ask new questions about cultural change.

We know that all of our cultural systems have a range of values. Some of them are admirable, altruistic, and humanizing; others are confrontational, depletive, and disparaging. When our cultures change, we should work on saving the good and releasing the bad. Capra (1996, p. 11) notes that this is a long and difficult process and that we must seriously consider what is to be lost in the transition. If we remember the quotation based on Chief Seattle, we recognize that we are strands in the web of life and that what we do to others, we do to ourselves. Our communities can no longer be made up of just ourselves. So if we save the good aspects of our cultural systems and share them with others, we

share the best for all of us. The new scientists of deep ecology note that the defining characteristic of this new way of thinking is ethics. They found that the old way of doing science was not life preserving; it was life destroying. They question why biologists would release new and unknown types of micro-organisms into the environment. They question biologists who torture animals and produce commercial cosmetics in the name of science. They disapprove of physicists spending so much time creating war devices.

So what is the new ethics of deep ecology? The answer may surprise you. All of these great minds have noted that there was a time when we deeply respected Mother Earth. There was a time when we knew of the stars, the moon, the sun, and the planets, and we felt closely related to them. There was a time when the sun was sacred. Now, we know the answer. The people that they are talking about are the First Nations and the First Peoples. They are seeking your wisdom. They read about you with love and respect. They want to adopt the best of your cultural values into the new Ecological Culture. If you concur with this new quest, you may find the next step in this process to be the most difficult—sharing your values.

Sharing Cultural Values

There is a great distrust of outsiders among us. We do not believe that others understand us. We question why they want to learn our language. We find their questions about our folklore to be disturbing. We refuse to answer them and label our knowledge as tribal secrets. Even those whom we have know for many years occasionally provoke doubt in us. What we do not realize is that when a culture can only turn within, it dies. The walls of protection around us have become prison walls. Some of our leaders have become like prison guards. Our children understand this. They are known for their jail breaks. Some are fugitives wanted by tribal laws. Perhaps it is time to really look at tribal self-disclosure because we feel that it is the product of faulty thinking.

When we share our cultures, important parts of them continue to live. When we do not, they die. What does it mean to share? It means letting others know the best of your cultural system. It means the presentation of tribal self (Goffman, 1965). It means sharing those values and maintaining their authenticity as a new kind of symbolic maintenance (Berger & Luckmann, 1965). Under the old paradigm of shallow ecology, sharing was a dangerous activity because people would use tribal self-disclosure against them. In the thinking of the new deep ecology, the cultural ecology, sharing is networking. It is learning of the best of others so that we all overcome the evils of the past. For example, the tradition of the Medicine Wheel is a wonderful philosophy that incorporates many of the values of the new Ecological Culture. Such knowledge should not remain hidden.

What many of us may have trouble with in this new cultural ecology is what we perceive to be the negative side of change—the old cultural ways die. This view is wrong. Many of the old cultural values continue to live, but they live in a new network of co-operation. They now belong to a larger community. Never before has the wisdom of the First Peoples and the First Nations been more in

demand. Never before has there been a new way of looking at the world that mirrors the traditional values of the past among hunters and gatherers and also horticulturists.

It is important to note the complexity of the subject of cultural sharing. For those who lead bilingual lives, the need for sharing is not an issue. Bilinguals live in both cultures; they continue to have an awareness of their own tribal values. However, when they are not aware of their own cultural values, they become prime candidates for forced identities. An identity is how you define yourself. A forced identity is how others define you. This is really what is at issue in cultural change. Each group has its own heritage. That is something that can never be taken away from you. Where did the Romans go? They are now called the Italians. All Italians know their heritage. They consider themselves to be the modern Romans. However, what has changed is their identity. They have new identities. They do not limit themselves by the past. They respect their past and cherish its tradition, but they are not limited by it. They are living in the present. They have a new identity. In portions of Italy, there are cultural movements lead by Italians to redefine themselves. They have done this by limiting the construction of their cities. They limit high rises; they make the church the centre of the city and so forth. They have modern identities, but they live in the heritage of their past. A similar situation can be found among members of First Nations and First Peoples. They share a rich heritage, but their identities vary greatly. Some are scientists; others are businessmen, farmers, or teachers. What is important, however, is that others not define them and that they define themselves. There have been numerous attempts by others to define them. Those who have accepted these definitions of self have adopted forced identities. History is replete with examples of such forced identities. Those who have not accepted the definition of self by others, remain centred.

Conclusion

We know that we cannot stop change. We know that change goes on all of the time. Cultures change; societies change; people change; languages change. Not all change is bad. It depends on where it is headed. We have argued that change toward shallow ecology is bad. Good change includes movement toward deep ecology. We also know that some cultures continue to absorb others. This process is called acculturation. The culture that continues to grow is a living culture, and the one that does not becomes a museum culture. It is time to rethink the concept of culture. It is the product of a system of relationships. These relationships change, and, consequently, the culture built upon them changes. When two cultures come into contact, we assume that one dominates and controls the other, leaving the weaker cultural system depleted and transformed in the process. This was the old way of looking at cultural contact. If humans are to avoid destroying themselves and their planet, this can no longer be the case. The new approach to change is to move toward networking. We desperately need to have the First Peoples and the First Nations in these networks. It will not come about in a climate of secrecy. It will not come about when a wall of suspicion

and mistrust is erected to prevent these values from becoming part of the larger ecological community.

Let us look at how cultural change works when values are shared. As any student of history knows, the Danes dominated England at one point. They provided England with its own legal system, Danish Law. After many generations, the Danes became British in heart and mind, but England was now a mixture of two groups, and the new legal system of England was Danish. Later, the French invaded and occupied England. They moved the capitol from Canterbury to London and made French the official language. Within two centuries, the French were absorbed. They became British, but the new language of Middle English was a combination of French and English. What we need to remember is that change is reciprocal. This is because the process of enculturation is mutual. Each group borrows from the other. When we borrow something from another culture, it becomes ours.

Fritjof Capra (1996) notes that natural change is like a flowing river. It is always moving. If we only focus on the periods of stability on the surface of the river, we overlook the fact that, underneath, we have raging currents. It continues to flow. Some of the past is never lost. It remains within the system in some form or shape or manner. Within the framework of dynamic human systems, important parts of cultures need not be lost. They change and become a part of the newly emerging system, especially if action is taken to promote such incorporation. This is the first time in human history when even the most influential and dominant cultures cannot preserve their most important dimensions. Indeed, the presently (and only temporarily) dominant cultures must change the most. It is their cultures that are utterly incompatible with ecological preservation. In their present configuration, their cultural values are the biggest obstacles to the preservation of the minimum planetary ecosystem absolutely necessary to prevent world-wide catastrophes. Impending problems, some of which will be at such a level as to be declared disasters, are likely to accompany global warming, the destruction of the ozone layer, mass species extinction, and other changes resulting from the organization of the industrial societies. A new culture is unavoidable if ecological problems are to be minimized. No existing cultures anywhere in the world will be preserved in their entirety. Some will change much more than others will. This is the new community and this is where the language of the Tribes needs to merge with the language of the new Ecological Culture.

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